Castlemaine Naturalist

July 2021

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Monthly newsletter of the Castlemaine Field Naturalists Club Inc.

Not so Sleepy Lizards!
Learn more at our July meeting
Photo by Jenny Rolland

COMING EVENTS

Friday July 9, 7.30pm – Monthly meeting

by Zoom (see details for joining on the back page)

Guest speaker: Dr Greg Kerr, Nature Glenelg Trust

"Behavioural ecology of the Sleepy Lizard: when life gets tough, monogamy has its advantages"

Victorians will know the Sleepy Lizard as the Shingleback or Stumpytail. For our July monthly meeting, Dr Greg Kerr, Senior Ecologist, Nature Glenelg Trust, will give fascinating new insight into the social behaviour of this species. In mammal and bird species there are many advantages of monogamy, particularly where parental care is critical to successful reproduction. Sleepy lizards are socially monogamous and a male will closely follow a female for many weeks prior to mating. Greg's research into the behavioural ecology of sleepy lizards leads to a rejection of the old idea that males are guarding the females, but rather suggests that it is the female who wears the pants in this relationship!

Excursion Saturday July 10 – Fungi on the Mount

Join fungi expert Joy Clusker for a relaxed amble on Mount Alexander looking for fungi. Joy will guide us on how to find and identify fungi, explaining their habitat preferences and important characteristics to look for in order to distinguish them.

Bring: Wet weather gear, boots, cameras and **small mirrors**. Remember it's cooler up on the Mount!

Meet: 1.30pm at the Octopus, Duke St, opposite the Castle Motel, Castlemaine, OR at 2pm in the Dog Rocks carpark, Joseph Young Drive, Mount Alexander.

Please comply with Government COVID-safe requirements on the day.

The Field Trip will be cancelled in extreme weather conditions.

June Meeting Presentation Report:

Julie Radford, Ecologist, Bush Heritage

"Seeds of Resilience" – planting for the future!

The feature of our June meeting was an informative and absorbing overview of a research project at Bush Heritage's Nardoo Hills Reserves designed to identify eucalypts that will cope with the hotter drier conditions already experienced and forecast to continue at the Reserves due to climate change.

Julie Radford, an ecologist with Bush Heritage, told us how the project has been planned drawing on climate modelling data from CSIRO and the Bureau of Meteorology, with project design contributed by Macquarie University and CSIRO and other research institutions, and seedlings developed in partnership with Greenfleet and Arborline.

The project was triggered in response to areas of dieback developing with increasing intensity and extent on the Reserves over the past 15 years, affecting mainly Grey Box *(Eucalyptus microcarpa)* and Yellow Box *(Eucalyptus melliodora)* trees in a 100 hectare area. Seeds from these species have been collected from 'climate analogue' areas in mid-north South Australia and central NSW, where eucalypts have already adapted to a hotter, harsher environment similar to that predicted for Nardoo Hills in 30 to 70 years' time. Control seed stock is sourced locally from Wedderburn and St Arnaud.

Dieback at Nardoo Hills Reserve (https://www.bushheritage.org.au)

After two years of analysis, planning, consulting and collaborating, and with help from volunteers, more than 11,000 seedlings have now been planted at the Reserve in a carefully mapped grid. Each tree is labelled with its own barcode that details the tree ID, position in the plot, parental line, provenance etc. This will allow close monitoring over the decades ahead, in order to identify trees that cope with the conditions most successfully and inform future revegetation. Interbreeding with local trees is expected and will also be monitored. Increased genetic diversity will hopefully aid capacity to adapt to a drying and warmer climate.

The seedlings, which were planted in rip lines, were watered in and have received one supplementary watering. Hand-weeding and stock replacement is undertaken, but beyond these steps the plants have to cope on their own.

Plant health and growth rates, as well as any subsequent regeneration at the site, will be monitored in the 450 plotted planting areas over the coming years and decades. It is anticipated that the short-term results will help guide further climate-adjusted revegetation works by Bush Heritage, Vic Roads and other organisations, as well as local farmers and other landowners.

The metadata underpinning this trial design and principles will be made available publicly for reference in planning future research on any aspect of the Climate-Ready Revegetation project.

Yellow Box (*Eucalyptus melliodora*) (https://www.bushheritage.org.au).

Nardoo Hills Reserves

At 1,207 hectares, Nardoo Hills is the largest of three Bush Heritage reserves in Victoria. It includes the Judith Eardley Reserve, the Barnett Block and the Lawan Reserve (named after the Dja Dja Wurrung word for Malleefowl) and is located 115 kilometres north west of Castlemaine, in the broader Kara Kara – Wedderburn landscape. It was selected for purchase because of its important heathy and grassy woodland habitats. Since European settlement, 83% of Victoria's woodland ecosystems has been lost to land clearance. This, combined with climate change, has led to dramatic loss of fauna and flora, with the recent dieback at Nardoo Hills being an example of this.

Nardoo Hills Reserves support a number of endangered species, including the Swift Parrot (*Lathamus discolor*), Hooded Robin *(Melanodryas cucullata*), Diamond Firetail (*Stagonopleura guttata*), Lace Monitor (*Varanus varius*), Fat-tailed Dunnart (*Sminthopsis crassicaudata*), Crested Bellbird (*Oreoica gutturalis*), Northern Golden Moths Orchid (*Diuris protena*) and Robust Greenhood Orchid (*Pterostylis valida*).

Nardoo Hills Reserves are the traditional lands of the Dja Dja Wurrung people, who have shared their knowledge on the cultural significance of their country, including identification of more than 20 scar trees.

The planned excursion to Nardoo Hills Reserves with Julie Radford on 12 June was cancelled due to COVID restrictions. This will be rescheduled to later in the year.

For more information about the Climate-Ready Revegetation Research project, see https://www.bushheritage.org.au/projects/nardoo-climate-ready-revegetation.

Cathrine Harboe-Ree

Autumn SEANA Get-together in Hamilton, April 16-18 2021

Report by Peter Turner

Following the 2019 Spring meeting in Castlemaine of SEANA (South East Australian Naturalists' Association), the Hamilton FNC offered to host the Autumn 2020 meeting – which had to be postponed until April 2021. Fourteen Castlemaine FNC members attended, and we all enjoyed the wide-ranging program of talks and excursions offered by the host club for the 130 field naturalists from across Victoria who attended. The meeting was based at the Hamilton Institute of Rural Learning, an interesting complex of mudbrick buildings adjacent to the Hamilton Community Parklands.

After a generous BBQ dinner on the Friday evening, there was a talk on the status of the Eastern Barred Bandicoot, followed by an optional walk in the Bandicoot enclosure. On Saturday there was a choice of 9 excursions led by HFNC members, plus 3 self-guided options, with repeat versions on Sunday. All the CFNC members registered for the Budj Bim World Heritage tour, which incurred an additional charge, and we were all included on the Saturday version. Other excursions covered the wide range of landforms, rivers and ecologies found around Hamilton – from the Southern Grampians, to the Mt Napier and Budj Bim (Mt Eccles) volcanoes and lava flow features, the Wannon River, and local birding areas.

The organisers have prepared a report for the SEANA website with many details of the excursions, including plant and bird lists and some pictures: https://seana.org.au/seana-autumn-2021-get-together-at-hamilton/.

The guest speaker after dinner on the Saturday night was Mark Bachmann, manager of the Nature Glenelg Trust, who enthralled his audience with his talk on Wetland Ecology and Restoration. Last year CFNC heard about one of the NGT's major restoration projects at Walker Swamp in the October Zoom presentation by Greg Kerr – who led one of the excursions to this site. The NGT website https://natureglenelg.org.au/ is worth viewing for the range and extent of the Trust's impressive work.

The highlight for Rosemary and me was the all-day tour to learn about the Budj Bim World Heritage area, ancestral and continuing home country of the Gunditjmara people, a 9935 ha Cultural Landscape added to the UNESCO World Heritage List on 6th July 2019. On the way to meet our local Gunditj Mirring guide, Braydon Saunders, we stopped to view the unusual Wallacedale Tumuli on the old Crusher Rd – large mounds that were formed from liquid lava flowing down the valley – one of only 3

places in the world where these rare "lava blisters" have been identified. After meeting Braydon at the Allambie property and hearing about the Budj Bim landscapes formed by successive lava flows, we drove further south to view the foundations of some of the 76 house sites that have been identified in one area – a village.

Lava blister or Tumulus
Photo by Peter Turner

Ring of stones remaining from house foundation. *Photo by Peter Turner*

Then on to Lake Condah/Tae Rak with views east to Budj Bim (Mt Eccles), and further information from Braydon – an excellent guide - about the area and the Gunditj Mirring plans to develop programs for greater understanding of the Indigenous history. After lunch by the lake some of us visited the Byaduk Caves – a series of openings where the crust that formed above the lava flow has broken, revealing tunnels linking adjacent sites.

One of the Byaduk Caves exposed when part of the crust fell into a lava tube
Photo by Peter Turner

On Sunday morning, Rosemary and I joined the excursion to Lake Linlithgow/Jenawarra, a large very shallow lake which is a major site for waterbirds. After early settlers had removed virtually all the vegetation around much of the lake for potato farming, over recent decades Hamilton FNC members have been involved in a major replanting project, with impressive regrowth, as well as regular bird surveys. In the afternoon we chose two contrasting self-guided options. The Hamilton Botanic Gardens were first planted in 1871, then fully developed following plans provided by William Guilfoyle in 1881. The Hamilton Community Parklands includes a 90 ha fenced area to protect the Eastern Barred Bandicoot. A self-guiding nature trail with signboards, set up by HFNC in the mid-1980's, provides information about the local flora and fauna, including the bandicoots.

Lake Linlithgow *Photo by Peter Turner*

This was a most successful, enjoyable weekend. We learnt a lot about this geologically and ecologically rich region of Victoria, coming away knowing that there are many other features of the region to explore on future visits, guided by the information provided by our hosts. Thanks and congratulation to Diane Luhrs and her team for a splendid SEANA program.

Naturalists without the Field

My niece works in the aged care sector at a coastal location in Victoria. She specialises in activities for the residents. She loves the natural world and is always out and about in her local area. For her 50th birthday I gave her membership of her local Branch of Field Naturalists – a very well established and active branch.

She is also able to access a regular, high quality newsletter and I often pass on the excellent newsletter from the Castlemaine Branch. In addition to that I have sent my used copies of the Birdlife Australia magazine for use with her group and we exchange regular emails about our sightings.

Recently, much to my delight, she has told me about the activities that she is organising for residents who are expressing keen interest in birds, native flora and other native fauna and the natural world in general, even though they are generally restricted to their immediate surrounds. They miss the natural world so much. Visiting speakers are welcomed, especially those with some "show and tell" with sound in the case of birds and animals.

There is a similar aged care establishment being built on the outskirts of Castlemaine. My niece's activities might be going to catch on and Castlemaine Field Naturalists Club may well find itself involved in activities with the local establishment.

Please share any ideas which you may think could assist my niece in her programme development.

Marli Wallace
marli@marliwallace.com.au

July (1943) Observations

George Broadway

Specimens submitted to Crosbie Morrison, Editor of "Wildlife" magazine in July 1943

BOTANICAL

Warradale S.A. A beautiful fungus specimen said to be fairly common around Aldgate in S.A. It has white gills and a red top with white spots. It is of course the Fly Agaric, now fairly common around here. In 1943 it was reported from three localities, Tasmania, Sth Aust and Emerald in Victoria. All associated with European trees.

Wentworth NSW: The plant specimen was a "Prickly Poppy" *Argemone Mexicana var ochroleuca*. Not classed as a serious weed although feebly poisonous.

SPIDERS

Wonthaggi: The Orchard or Bird-dropping Spider. Frequently sent in; see Dec '16

W.Coburg: Your spiders were the dangerous Red-back. *Latrodectus hasseltii.* Best to remove any rubbish in which they spin their web. As they are not pugnacious and can bite only through tender skin, there is no need to panic. And Ararat.

Ormond: Banded Nephila Spider

INSECTS

Bendigo: A defective specimen of the Vine Hawk Moth which has been plentiful this year. See NL Feb '18

Also St Kilda and Dandenong: The coloured "eyes" and the "sting" on the tail are mere decorations.

Melbourne: Rhinoceras Scarab Beetle, known as *Bolboceras*, is a scavenger, the horns on the head are used for lifting rubbish.

Sth Melb: Pupa of Cabbage White Butterfly June '16. Recently introduced in 1943, it was still unfamiliar to many people. The Robbs of Colac had been busy collecting chrysalises, the butterfly had arrived in Colac in some numbers. Thus doing the vegetable growers of Colac a good turn. They reported that thrushes had been doing a good job on clearing them up.

Dimboola: The pest on the grape-vines is the Greater Vine Scale, fortunately already parasitized by a small wasp whose exit holes could be seen on top of the scale.

Burnley: Eggs of the Footman Moth, *Ardices glatignyi*, whose "Woolly Bear" caterpillars are destructive garden pests June '16

Wyandra Q: Ghost Moth. The larva is a wood-boring grub and the moths emerge on cold wet nights.

Richmond: Long-horned Grasshopper. The organ like a scimitar at the end is for depositing the eggs.

W.Coburg: Rice Weevils, probably they got into the grain before it was put in the jar, most likely as eggs. The eggs have hatched, the larvae have eaten into the grain, and now the adult insects have been noticed. They are not unclean so heating the rice will render it suitable to eat. In preparing rice, if it is placed in water, the insects will float to the top and may be removed.

Newport: Convolvulus Hawk Moth. April '17

Brim: The mangled remains of one of our largest stick insects, the Pink-shouldered Phasma. A leaf-eater, it resembles the foliage in which it lives.

Thornbury: A Mole Cricket, the little chap that chirps underground on summer evenings.

BIRDS

Nhill: The parrots that occur in groups, fly straight up off the ground, and call "Tweet" repeated are probably Budgerigars or Neophema parakeets.

Nth Essendon: White magpies are extremely rare but not unknown. Other birds are sometimes born without black pigments. White Blackbirds and crows have been known.

Pt Lonsdale: Spotted Pardalote or Diamond Bird. The vernacular name is an attempt to render the call in terms of human speech - it is a three note call, uttered quickly; the middle note being a major third higher than the first and the third a fourth lower than the first.

GENERAL

Gembrook: Length of time between laying to hatching of the wasp's egg depends largely on climatic conditions. The shortest time might be a few days, while the longest might be a matter of months.

Double Bay: The crushed and dried specimens might have been the Red Velvet Earth Mite. See July '17. Perhaps you could send some specimens in a bottle of spirit or formalin?

Caulfield: The black rat would be a member of the ship rat species which varies in colour from light brown to very dark. It is more wary and more difficult to trap than the Brown rat which frequents houses.

Birds of Sutton Grange, June 2021 - Nigel Harland

Superb Fairywren	Welcome Swallow	Whistling Kite
Red-browed Finch	Long-billed Corella	Red Wattlebird
White-browed Scrubwren	Crimson Rosella	Galah
Australian Magpie	Flame Robin	Striated Pardalote
Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	New Holland Honeyeater	Yellow-tufted Honeyeater
Australian Raven	Buff-rumped Thornbill	Common Bronzewing
Laughing Kookaburra		

When we first moved here 30 years ago we found that many Flame Robins spent time with us during the winter months. As time went by we saw less and less, so to see one last month was quite special. Anne saw it from out of the kitchen window and it stayed just a few days.

Buff-rumped Thornbill is a rare visitor which can be differentiated from the Yellow-rumped by a less yellow rump and no obvious striations on the head.

Observations

Kerrie Jennings, Baringhup

Tyde's Sand Wasp, *Podalonia tydei*
Photo by Kerrie Jennings

Blue Ringtail damselfly, *Austrolestes annulosus. Photo by Kerrie Jennings*

Tydes Sand Wasp (*Podalonia tydei*)

I noticed an orange and black wasp feeding on nectar from a garden plant at Eastville recently. An entry to iNaturalist somewhat reliably suggested it to be a Tyde's Sand Wasp.

Blue Ringtail (*Austrolestes annulosus*)

I love spending time near the water where there is yet another fascinating world to explore. On a warm late Autumn afternoon, the damselflies were out and about on the edges of what we call our 'big dam'. A recent Castlemaine Field Naturalists talk meant that I now have on hand Reiner Richter's book, 'Dragonflies and Damselflies of Victoria and Tasmania' to help with details and Reiner himself assisted with ID via iNaturalist. Damselflies fold their similarly sized and shaped wings closed above their body when resting and their nearly hemispherical eyes are well separated to the side of the head. Mature males of the Blue Ringtail are the largest and bluest (the warmer the weather the bluer they get) local species and can be found at a wide range of still water such as our farm dam where we frequently see them resting on grass stems, sometimes in quite high numbers. Interesting also is that whereas dragonfly larvae have internal gills, damselfly larvae have external gills at the end of their body.

Rakali, near Loddon River, Baringhup *Photo by Kerrie Jennings*

Rakali (*Hydromys chrysogaster*)

Back on the farm at Baringhup, I'm attempting a switch from rat poisons to live traps for rodents, and to simply try to keep up with the numbers of foxes. While the Black Rat trapping

has been surprisingly successful, the jury is still out on the foxes. During a recent attempt, the roast chicken baited fox trap was sited on a river crossing just below our home. Next morning there was no fox, but a Rakali waiting patiently for release. Although sighted semi-regularly along our stretch of the Loddon for a good 30 years, I'd never seen one so closely. Surprised by its beauty, gentleness, long whiskers and beautiful thick coat, the ID was doubly confirmed by a white-tipped tail. I quickly snapped a photo, the Rakali calmly waddled off to quickly disappear amongst the nearest rocks in the river, and I returned home to email a report to Geoff Williams at APC.

Cathrine Harboe-Ree

These Liesegang rings in Campbells Creek, approximately 50 cm wide, show coloured mineral bands in sedimentary rock.

Peter and Rosemary Turner

Powerful Owl with Ringtail Possum in the Castlemaine Botanic Gardens on 19th June - next day it had a raven at foot! Note the white-tipped tail wrapped around the branch.

Red-headed Mouse Spider (*Missulena occatoria)* walking fast across the Goldfields Track leading up towards The Monk.

Photos by Peter Turner

Nesting time: We had some firewood delivered recently, with fibrous bark on some pieces. The pardalotes started to pull fibres off on June 13th, flying off to line their nest (hidden away somewhere!) before returning for more over several days. I left some large pieces of fibrous bark near the pile, and on 24th June the raven found it!

South East Australian Naturalists' Association Inc. Spring Camp

Friday 22 – Sunday 24 October 2021

The Ballarat Field Naturalists' Club warmly invites Field Naturalist Club members to join them for the SEANA Spring Camp 2021.

Program There will be ten different, full-day field trips to choose from, each visiting multiple sites such as Woowookarung and Creswick Regional Parks, local lakes and waterfalls, Trust for Nature properties, Ballarat Environment Network-managed biodiversity reserves, Mt Beckworth, Clarkesdale Bird Sanctuary and Enfield State Park. The excursions will provide the opportunity to enjoy and learn about wildflowers, land use history, geology, endangered grasslands, woodlands, forests, wetlands, birds and conservation & land management themes across the Victorian Volcanic Plains and Central Highlands bioregions on Wadawurrung and Dja Dja Wurrung country.

Registration and Payment by Friday, 10th September 2021. Please note that attendance numbers will be capped at 80, so get in early to secure your place. A COVID-Safe Plan will be in place.

Attendees are responsible for booking their own accommodation. Dinner is provided on Saturday night.

Further information Field Naturalists' Club of Ballarat – email: ballaratfnc@gmail.com; or Bill Elder, FNCB President - Mob. 0427 941 565, email: elder17bill@gmail.com

Disclaimer: The opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the contributors and not necessarily those of the club

Castlemaine Field Naturalists Club

PROGRAM

Monthly meetings will continue to be held on-line via ZOOM until further notice, commencing at 7.30pm. If you have registered for our previous webinar meetings you will be sent the link for registering with Zoom. If you have not joined before and wish to attend, please email Peter Turner at munrodsl@iinet.net.au

Our guest speaker will follow the usual 'observations' session when members can share recent interesting sightings with an option to show a photo or two. If you have photos to be shown please email JPEG file(s) to Euan Moore at calamanthus5@bigpond.com by Noon on the day of the meeting.

Excursions will be held this year (subject to COVID restrictions) on the Saturday after the monthly meeting. Meet at the Octopus (opposite the motel in Duke St) for departure at 1.30pm unless otherwise advised.

Fri Jul 9 Meeting: Speaker - Greg Kerr (Nature Glenelg Trust) 'Behavioural ecology of the Sleepy Lizard (Shingleback)'. ***See page 1 for details of talk***.

Sat Jul 10 Excursion: Mt Alexander, 'Fungi on the Mount' with Joy Clusker. ***See page 1 for details on where and when to meet and what to bring***.

Fri Aug 13 Meeting: Speaker – Rod Orr (Bendigo FNC) 'Flora of Fryers Ridge'

Sat Aug 14 Excursion: 'Fryers Ridge Wildflowers' with Rod Orr

Mon Aug 16 Roadside clean-up: leader Geoff Harris

Fri Sept 10 Meeting: Speaker - Cathrine Harboe-Ree – 'Nature in the far south: A journey to the Antarctic'

Sat Sept 11 Excursion: Chewton Bushlands

Castlemaine Naturalist - email newsletter material to: newsletter.cfnc@gmail.com
*** Deadline for the August edition: 30th July**

Club website (Webmaster: Ron Wescott) - http://castlemainefnc.wordpress.com/

Subscriptions for 2021 (Membership forms on CFNC website)
Ordinary membership: Single $35, Family $50
Pensioner or student: Single $25, Family $30
Subscription includes postage of the monthly newsletter, Castlemaine Naturalist

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